

GOSPEL IN THE MAJOR SCALE

FANNIE C. FISHER



THE GOSPEL IN THE MAJOR SCALE

By
FANNIE C. FISHER



TORONTO:
WILLIAM BRIGGS
1913

ML 3812
F533
G67
1913
Mushart

Copyright, Canada, 1913, by
FANNIE C. FISHER

TO
THE MEMORY OF
A SAINTED MOTHER

Who instilled into the hearts of her children a profound
reverence for God and His word, who filled their
minds and lips with gems of sacred song,
and who by a life of triumphant
faith inspired them to their
best endeavors: these
few pages are
lovingly

DEDICATED

The Gospel in the Major Scale

We have all heard a great deal of the very important part which music plays in religion. Music has ever been called the handmaid of religion, and it is true that music appeals to the heart as nothing else does, and a message from God may be sung into a heart which will open to no other persuasive knocking. A hymn is truly "A Sermon on Wheels," but just now I do not mean to speak to you on "Music in Religion," but "Religion in Music."

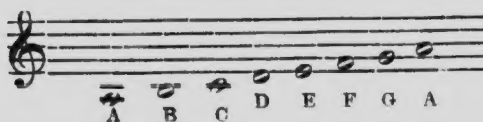
The thoughts that I shall endeavor to give you have come to me one at a time, and as I have caught the ideas, pondered on them and pieced them together, I have become so interested at the way they fitted together and made a complete circle of thought, that I felt they were too beautiful to keep to myself. The chief difficulty in undertaking to give these thoughts to others was in making them plain to those who do not understand harmony as well as to those who do, but I hope, by the time I have finished, that you will find I have succeeded in doing so.

The Gospel in the Major Scale

We all know that sound is caused by vibration, and that pleasant or musical sounds are caused by regular vibrations. Now the various musical instruments have been made to sound the tones in regular order, so that a pleasing succession of sounds is produced, each made to respond to the touch, with the right number of vibrations, to produce the tone desired.

Two tones, one of which is produced by double as many vibrations as the other, are so alike that they are practically the same, except for the pitch, and are said to be an octave apart. This name is given because between the one note and the other there are seven tones, the one repeated making the eighth. These seven tones are called by the first seven letters of the alphabet and can be played on the white keys of a piano. Besides these seven tones there are half notes or semitones between some of the notes of the scale, but not all. These notes, black and white, make twelve semitones to an octave. The original arrangement of notes to form a scale for the pianoforte was begun on the first letter, A, but that was a much sadder scale

ÆOLIAN SCALE



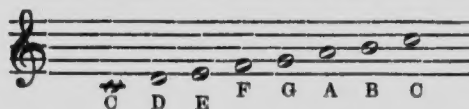
The Gospel in the Major Scale

than the one now in use. "A" scale has now another form, which is this original scale with the seventh note raised a semitone. This has again been modified by raising the sixth as well as the seventh note in ascending and using the old *Æolian* style in descending. It is called the melodic minor scale, and it is used at the present time.

But a newer, brighter scale has been arranged, starting from C, the third note of the minor scale, and it is about the seven notes of this major scale that I am going to talk to you to-day.

Now, in playing a scale, it would seem to the uninitiated ear that each note was of equal importance, but this is not so. Each note has its own value, and its own work in the scale. We can start a scale from any note of the twelve semitones, but for the present we will talk of the one starting from C, which is called the Natural Scale, as all its tones are produced by the white notes of the piano, without any assistance of sharps or flats, as the black notes are called.

MAJOR SCALE—C Natural

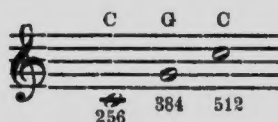


The first note, then, of the C Scale, as of all other

The Gospel in the Major Scale

scales, is called the Key-note or Tonic. It is the strongest, most important note of the scale, as it gives the tone to the whole scale, and is heard by the mind even when it is not played, and it is played more often than any other note in the scale and often begins and always ends any composition.

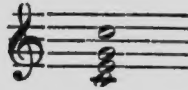
The note of second importance in the scale is the fifth, called the Dominant. It is midway between the lower C and the upper C, and is produced by a corresponding number of vibrations. The "middle C" has 256 vibrations to the second, the upper C has 512 vibrations to the second, and G, the Dominant, between, has 384 vibrations to the second. It is from



this fifth note or Dominant, that the scale next in order always starts.

The sweetest note of the scale is the third degree, called the Mediant, because it stands midway between the Tonic and the Dominant. These three notes, the Tonic, Mediant and Dominant, including the Octave, sounded together, form the chord called the Common Chord of the Tonic, which is the strongest and most restful chord in music, almost invariably closing any composition.

The Gospel in the Major Scale



Now I want you to notice that you cannot add any other tone to these three without making a discord, and that gives us the first analogy between music and religion as we hold it.

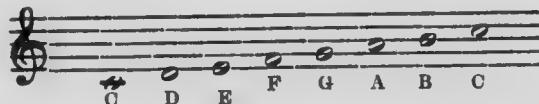
There are twelve semitones to an octave. The number twelve is symbolic of universality, and is used frequently in the Bible for that purpose. We read of the twelve tribes of Israel, the twelve Apostles, and the twelve gates of the Heavenly City. Now when we have started a new scale from the fifth note of each scale we come back in a circle to the one from which we started. This gives us the circle, the emblem of Eternity.



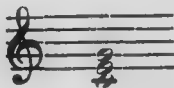
Then again there are seven tones in the Octave, after which we reach the one from which we started. The number seven is symbolic of perfection and is

The Gospel in the Major Scale

significant of the complete union of the Divine and Human.

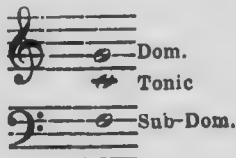


Once more three is a most significant number in our religion, and finds its highest realism in the Triune Godhead.



In the notes of the chord of which I have spoken we find the analogy most complete, the key-note, in its strength, sufficiency and all pervading influence, standing for God the Father; the Mediant, with its sweetening effect, standing for God the Son; the strong Dominant, which is called the note of Motion, because it is the root of all movement to higher keys and also to all fundamental discords, stands for the Holy Spirit. You will see these analogies brought out with more and more force as we go on.

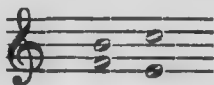
The note which holds the third place in importance is the fourth note of the scale, called the Sub-Dominant.



The Gospel in the Major Scale

It has that name because it stands five tones below the Tonic as the Dominant does above it. This note is the first one used as a discord. I could not help wondering "What is the first discord in life?" What is the discordant note, so strong that only the Dominant and Tonic are stronger powers in the life? And I thought of sin. Is not that true to life? The rule which governs the use of this discordant note is the most interesting of all the analogies and the one which came first to my mind. Whenever this note is used as a discord it must be followed by the Mediant, which is called "Resolving the Discord." So from this rule we may learn "All sin must be laid on Christ, the one mediator between God and man," the very name "Mediant" bringing this thought more closely to our minds.

The next note of which I will speak is the seventh note of the scale. This is the most sensitive note of the scale and has such a constant tendency to rise to the Tonic that it is called the leading note. It was only a step in thought to give to this note the name of "Prayer," the link between man and God; and again the same rule which orders that the Sub-Dominant should fall the Mediant also demands that this



The Gospel in the Major Scale

leading note should rise to the Tonic. How beautifully suggestive of the prayers of the children of men rising to the Father in heaven.

We have now five notes out of the seven, the first, third and fifth forming the Trinity, or God notes, the fourth, Sin, being one of the humanity notes, and the seventh, Prayer, the link between.

To get the significance of the second note of the scale, called the Super-Tonic, I took the Dominant as the bass of a common chord, for the common chord on the Dominant is the nearest related chord to the chord on the Tonic, which I have already shown you. I found I had G, the Dominant, and B, leading note, the Dominant representing the Holy Spirit, and the leading note Prayer, and, recognizing the leading note, Prayer, as the tender note of the chord, I asked, "What makes the third note of power based on the Holy Spirit?" It was not long before Service came to my mind as the strong note of motion in this chord. Do you see what a beautiful chord that makes? Holy



Spirit, Prayer, Service. So now we can add service to the degrees of the scale as the Super-Tonic.

There is now only one degree left un-named, and to get that I took the sub-dominant as the bass of

The Gospel in the Major Scale

another common chord; and I want you to notice that these three notes, the Tonic, Dominant and Sub-Dominant, are the only notes on which you can build major common chords without adding accidental sharps or flats. So I took this Sub-dominant, Sin, for the bass of another common chord, and as the Tonic or "God" note forms the Dominant of this chord it was the tender note of the chord which needed to be supplied. I thought of Sorrow for the sixth note of the scale. But that did not satisfy me, as there are other sides to life beside sorrow; but with joy and



sorrow together we get the idea of the over-ruling Providence of God, which makes of our life the best that can be made of what we have spoiled by sin, and in the end links us to God again. So we have this third chord, Sin, Providence, God. Now we have the seven notes of the scale complete.

Tonic,	God.
Super-Tonic,	Service.
Mediant,	Jesus Christ.
Sub-Dominant,	Sin.
Dominant,	Holy Spirit.
Sub-Mediant,	Providence.
Leading Note,	Prayer.

The Gospel in the Major Scale

Now in thinking of these tones and how to impress them on the memory I concluded I would use colored chalks, and when I began to think of the colors they formed themselves into the same circle of significance as the tones of the scale.

For the Tonic we will use yellow, the color of gold, of the sun and of fire; types of purity, light and life. For the Mediant we will use red, the color of blood, the type of sacrificial love. "For greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend." What more appropriate color for service can we find than orange, composed as it is of the "gold of obedience" and the "red of self-sacrifice."

After red we begin to see the effect of the blue mixed with it. And just as there are only three tones to make a chord that contains no discord, so there are only three primal colors. The first mixture of blue with red, giving us crimson, reminds us of the verse, "Though your sins be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." This color fits exactly into the Sub-Dominant as typical of Sin.

Next, we have more blue than red, making purple, which is ever symbolic of royalty and is eminently fitting to represent the Dominant—the note of the Holy Spirit.

Next, we come to the blue of Heaven, and imme-

The Gospel in the Major Scale

diately we think of the over-arching firmament, bright with light at times, over-clouded with mists from earth at others, but always the same blue sky, with its ever-present sun by day and its glorious array of stars by night, reminding us of "The God of Israel that slumbers not nor sleeps."

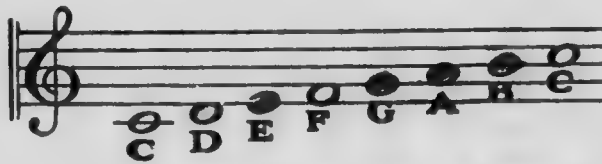
"In the great world there are no accidents:
Enthroned above the ages' ebb and flow,
Unseen, misunderstood,
God rules, who in all seasons and events,
Through fiery evil, and o'erwhelming woe,
Forever works the good."

From blue we come in touch again with gold and those two together give us green for the "leading note" of Prayer; and how beautiful is that comparison! Is not everything that starts from the earth and grows heavenward clothed in living green? See every tiny blade of grass pointing to the sky! See every plant and tree pointing upward to the sky, and doubly suggestive in that it only points, it never reaches the sky, leaving faith its room to form the link by which we can come into the very presence of God.

Now with the added clearness that we get by using these colors in their order do we not see a true order in the degrees of the scale which follows the order of

The Gospel in the Major Scale

all other things in the universe, and tells us by things which we see the meaning of things which are unseen and eternal.



Let us run over these notes again as we have them now:

Tonic,	God,	Yellow.
Super-Tonic,	Service,	Orange.
Mediant,	Jesus Christ,	Red.
Sub-Dominant,	Sin,	Crimson.
Dominant,	Holy Spirit,	Purple.
Sub-Mediant,	Providence,	Blue.
Leading note,	Prayer,	Green.

The order of these names for the notes is in perfect sequence. God hears our prayers and claims our

The Gospel in the Major Scale

obedience. Jesus Christ claims our service and carries our sins. Our sin, shown us by the Holy Spirit, is laid on Christ. The Holy Spirit, after convincing us of our sin, guides us through all the pathways of life, and, through the joys and sorrows and needs of our daily life, leads us by prayer and communion with God till we reach the life that is "hid with Christ in God."

There are a few beautiful suggestions growing out of this arrangement of the notes.

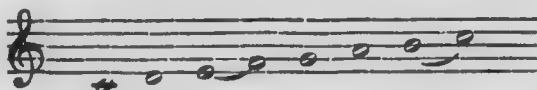
One is that between the fourth note, "Sin," and the seventh note, "Prayer," the discord, called the Tri-tone, is so very objectionable that it is seldom if ever sounded alone together, and it is not even allowed that one should follow the other in two successive notes of a melody. Musicians tell us that it is because one note is the characteristic note of the scale above the one we are using and the other note is characteristic of the scale below the one we are using—for example, in the scale of C the fourth note is F, which, if we were playing the scale of G, would have to be sharpened, while the seventh note is B, which, if we were playing the scale of F, would have to be flattened. Is not this equally true in the spiritual life? Prayer is the characteristic note of the Christian life, while sin is

The Gospel in the Major Scale

the characteristic note of life lived apart from God.
Does that recall two lines of a good old hymn?

“Restraining prayer we cease to fight,
Prayer makes the soldier’s armour bright.
And Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees.”

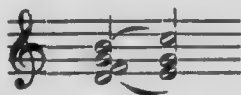
Another sweet thought is this: Between the third and fourth notes the distance is only a semitone, the smallest recognized distance between any two notes. So there is nothing between a repentant sinner and his Saviour. In the same way there is only a semitone between the seventh or leading note and the Tonic—God. So there is nothing between a praying soul and his God.



Here is another beautiful thought. In playing the chord of the Tonic it is quite allowable to use the two notes, the first and the third, and omit the fifth. Now this does not mean that the Dominant is not so important as the Mediant, but that its tone so nearly resembles the Tonic that it can be omitted and not be very much missed. But the Mediant must never be left out. I could not help thinking that many a soul has been saved without having heard of the Holy

The Gospel in the Major Scale

Spirit. Yet the Holy Spirit was at work and there although unrecognized; but no sinful soul can be saved without the atoning blood of Christ and just as the chord without the Mediant is too meagre to be borne, so the Father and the Holy Spirit would be more than sinful man could bear if it were not for the revelation of the Father by the Saviour. So we have these three notes each separate and distinct, and yet together forming a complete trinity of tone. The chord of the Dominant with the discording Sub-Dominant sounded with it, followed by this chord of the Tonic makes the most perfect close to any composition and is called the Perfect Cadence.



There is just one more analogy which I want you to notice, and that is one which presents us the life spiritual as above and beyond the natural life, yet beginning in it. The eight notes of the octave are divided into two tetrachords, or sets of four notes, each containing two tones followed by a semitone. The first four notes, C, D, E, F, form the lower tetrachord, and the last four notes, G, A, B, C, form the higher tetrachord. The intervals in the upper tetrachord are exactly similar to those of the lower tetrachord, but the difference in the notes themselves and

The Gospel in the Major Scale

their treatment supplies us with one of the wonderful laws of God.

The first tetrachord runs—God, Obedience, Jesus, Sin. Now from this Sin note we must turn back and rest on the third note—the Mediant, Jesus Christ. The second tetrachord reads—Holy Spirit, Providence, Prayer, God. There is no turning back here, but straight progress up to God.

Does not this bear out the teaching of the necessity of repentance and the atoning blood of Christ? And also that the new birth to the spiritual life by the power of the Holy Spirit will carry us on to “the perfecting of the saints.” “That as sin reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Now I want to take you back to the old Æolian scale and show you the difference between the old minor scale and the major scale. It seems as though the coming of Christ to the world has made so much more brightness and joy, that the very notes of the scale had to be changed to give voice to the gladness of our hearts.

The fourth note and the fifth have always been the same, and are the same in all scales, even of barbaric days. So men everywhere and at all times have had a sense of sin and a conviction that there is a God and a judgment. The three notes that have been altered to

The Gospel in the Major Scale

form the major scale from the minor are the third, the sixth and the seventh, the notes corresponding to Jesus Christ, Providence and Prayer. In the old scale the semitone was not between sin and the Saviour—there was another semitone between. Do you not see that in the old dispensation sin was punished by death? That was the only punishment for sin that could be understood in those days; and we read of the old laws concerning sacrifices as instituted by God through His servant Moses. But when Christ came to make of Himself one complete and perfect sacrifice, and died “the just for the unjust,” there was no longer any sacrifice needed for the putting away of sin. This corresponds exactly with the difference between the minor and major third degree of the scale; and indeed the new scale of C major starts from the very note, which in the old minor scale stands for Jesus Christ and sacrifice, as though the brighter and happier scale had for its key note the death of Jesus Christ.

The next note that is changed, taking them in the order in which we learned them, is the seventh, or “Prayer” note. Was there not in the old dispensation the “Holy of Holies,” into which the high priest alone might enter, and that only once a year. At the death of Christ the veil of the temple was “rent in twain,” and Christ became our Great High Priest, holy, harmless, “who needed not daily, as those high priests, to

The Gospel in the Major Scale

offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people. But this He did once, when He offered up Himself."

Seeing then we have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, . . . let us come boldly to the throne of the Heavenly Grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Here we find the difference between the minor and major seventh—immediate access to the Father by Jesus Christ.

The third note to be changed is the sixth degree or the Providence note, and may we not recall the Saviour's words, "When He, the Spirit of Truth is come, He will guide you into all truth." How wonderfully near and intimate is the guidance of the Holy Spirit in this later dispensation in comparison to the guidance that was given to the people before the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. How intermittent, sudden and lightning-like were the flashes of light compared with which we have the shining of the sun to-day. "Greater things than these shall ye do," said our Saviour, "because I go to my Father." How great is the responsibility of life to-day, with all its privileges and power.

Now up to the present we have kept entirely within one octave, but I told you it was from the Dominant that we start on the next new scale. This becomes very significant when we remember that the Dominant

The Gospel in the Major Scale

is the note of the Holy Spirit; and that the note that is changed in the new key is the old Sub-Dominant note of Sin, which has to be replaced by a sharpened note, and then becomes the new leading note or Prayer note. So as we yield to the influence of the Holy Spirit it always means to us a cleansing from some sin and a clearer and more enlightened prayer life. This is the rule of all the scales till we have been through the whole circle of the twelve. Start with the Dominant or Holy Spirit note, and, dropping some sin or weakness, we come nearer to the thought of God in our prayers and consequently more in line with the purpose of God for us, so that our prayers are all "in My name," or such things as Christ would ask for us; prayers that would seek—not to bend God's will to ours, but ours to His—prayers not for what God can do for us, but what we can do for God; prayers—not for high powers or great positions, but that we may be great enough to fill a humble position nobly, that we may be worthy to do a humble task greatly.

Now there is a reverse side to this, for the next closely related key to the tonic, after the one starting on the Dominant, is the one starting on the Sub-Dominant or "Sin" note. This scale starts five tones below the Tonic instead of five above, and is really the scale below the Tonic scale, as the scale on the Dominant

The Gospel in the Major Scale

is the one above it. In this scale, then, we start on the Sub-Dominant or sin note, and the note which should have been "Prayer" in the tonic scale has to be flattened to make the correct Sub-Dominant or sin note for the new scale. So in our life, sin yielded to lowers our sense of communion with God, and makes us ready to start another sin on a still lower grade or scale. Now when a composer wishes to brighten a composition he uses the key of the Dominant, while if he wishes to make it softer or sadder he uses the key of the Sub-Dominant. So if we wish to make our lives continuously bright and victorious we must yield constantly to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, which is the only power that can keep us free from sin.

Every different key as we pass on has its own peculiar characterizing quality. The natural scale of "C," which we have been using, has the simplicity and openness of childhood. The key of "A" with three sharps, in which Mendelssohn's "Spring Song" is written, has all the gladness and sprightliness of spring and youth. As we pass on "F sharp" has all the grandeur of the richest and fullest life with its success and responsibilities—its joys and sorrows so intermingled that one can scarcely have any joy that is not touched with some tinge of sadness, just as the notes of this scale can all be turned to flats without altering

The Gospel in the Major Scale

anything but the names. But with our faith strong in God, we can say:

“He sendeth sun, he sendeth shower,
Alike they’re needful for the flower,
And joys and tears alike are sent
To give the soul fit nourishment.
As comes to me, or shade or sun,
Father, Thy will, not mine, be done.”

With this scale the zenith of our circle is reached and we pass onward still, with but a gentler gait, dropping flats as we go. Five flats is one of the richest, sweetest keys, and the next one, with four flats, is religious and slightly regretful. “E” flat, with three flats, is altogether religious, and if you will think of the tune “Aurelia,” to the hymn “The Church’s One Foundation,” you will realize how thoroughly the key is in harmony with the sentiment of the hymn. Then again the next scale, “B” flat, is almost triumphant, and makes us think of the saints waiting “To crown Him Lord of All,” as we sing that grand hymn, “All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name,” to the old tune “Miles Lane.” In this key of “B” flat we have travelled around till the very note we started out with as Sin has become the Dominant or Holy Spirit note. So in our lives the very sin we start out with may be so overcome and guarded against that it becomes the

The Gospel in the Major Scale

foundation of our most triumphant service for the Master. I have only to mention Jerry McCauley as an example of what can be done in this way. From this scale we pass to the last of the circle, "F." That is the last before the Tonic "C" is reached again. This key is deeply characteristic of peace. The beautiful hymn, "Sun of My Soul," to the tune "Hursley," to which it is always sung, brings out the beauty and restfulness of this key. In this last scale, the original note of Sin with which we started, is used for the actual key-note, giving us a hint of the time when sin will be lost in God, and death, its punishment, swallowed up in victory. We have now completed the circle of every key in music.

I can only add to these thoughts the hope that everyone who reads them will see the beauty of a life in perfect harmony with God—that having as the key-note of life, the underlying master of it—God, yielding to Him willing obedience and *service*, trusting in *Jesus* to cleanse from all *sin* and following the guidance of the *Holy Spirit*, we may all be able to meet every temptation and come off "more than conquerors," and may be able to meet every vicissitude of life, so that its joys or sorrows, riches or poverty may but lead us more fully to follow out God's plan for us, and to more perfect *communion* with Him, till our lives at last shall

The Gospel in the Major Scale

be hid with Christ in God; and we may find in God our "abiding rest," our "Perfect Cadence," and our "eternal home."

"O, God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come.
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home."